

HR

WSD Personnel
Washington State
Employee
Assistance
Program

FrontLine

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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The Answer's in the Group

Are you struggling with a personal crisis or mental health issue and feel misunderstood, unable to communicate, or totally alone? Group therapy may be an effective treatment option for you. Group therapy is a therapeutic technique using small group interaction to change negative mental and behavior patterns. Group members are expected to be honest and open in their communication with one another, which is generally done through talking around a theme chosen by a professional counselor. Things move slowly at first. But, once group members trust and bond with each other—look out! You can make big changes in your life, and fast. Find therapists who offer group therapy through your employee assistance provider, mental health association, or health insurance plan.



Developing a Safety Culture

Preventing accidents is more than hanging up a warning poster. The safest workplaces develop a *culture of safety*. Employees naturally resist violating safety practices—a major cause of workplace accidents. Workers feel personal ownership in maintaining a safe environment. No one needs to remind them to “think safety” because they’re living it. When safe behaviors and thinking safety seem set on autopilot, you’ve got it.



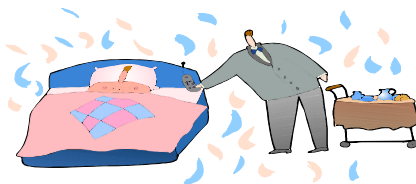
Battling Against Sleep a No Win

If waking up and getting out of bed is a daily “chore,” a tardy arrival at work usually follows. Unless there’s a medical problem, the likely reason is sleep deprivation caused by an improper attitude toward sleep. Like exercise, you may see sleep as a nagging inconvenience—something getting in your way. You must sleep, but you wait for it to force itself upon you. Like exercise, you may not incorporate sleep into a routine that allows the necessary amount of time—somewhere between seven and nine hours. Give up the battle against sleep. Make it part of your routine. Reap its benefits. Avoid the side effects of sleep deprivation.



Being Sick Can Be Bad for Your Health

Too much work stress can affect your health. Too little stress can also have an effect. If you are on sick leave for a long time, monitor yourself for depression symptoms. You may notice subtle negative thoughts about your self-esteem emerge. Work provides huge psychological rewards, including social interaction, sense of accomplishment and routine. While you may be recovering from a physical illness, it’s the “whole you” that needs to return to work healthy. You can get a list of depression symptoms from a counselor or health care provider.



Was It a Panic Attack?

If you use an “I can take it” approach to manage stress, *cumulative* stress may be building up. Your body may respond with anxiety or panic-like symptoms to:

- A fast-paced, high stress society.
- Conflicting work and family demands.
- Greater financial risk and insecurity about the future.

The term “panic attack” conjures up an image of extreme agitation. Some people with anxiety and panic symptoms experience this type of attack. Some do not. Instead, they suffer disturbing and puzzling—but less acute—symptoms such as heart palpitations, sleep disturbances, rashes, breathing difficulties, or other problems. Dozens of symptoms relate to panic and anxiety. Discovering the cause may not happen until an acute attack forces you to seek medical attention. Prevention of anxiety and panic symptoms is not a test of willpower and includes:

- Taking a break from work.
- Seeking life balance, including fun.
- Learning about panic and anxiety symptoms from your doctor, employee assistance professional, or health care provider.
- Searching the Internet will lead you to many sources, but beware of scam “cures” and misinformation on Web sites. The leading organization for information is the nonprofit Anxiety Disorders Association of America at www.adaa.org.

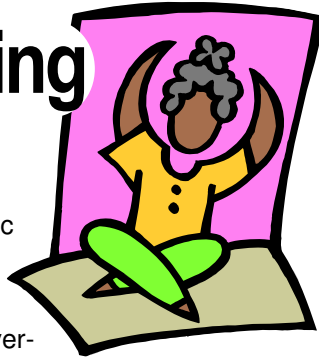


Families Fighting to Fit It All In



Late night school practices, fast-food dinners, cramming for tomorrow’s schoolwork, music lessons, sports events, errands, housework—now repeat. If this routine rings familiar, and you can’t give anything up right now, how do you reduce family stress? Those who’ve done it say the trick is to implement “family management rules.” 1) *The Huddle*: Organize a family meeting to discuss how to make the week less stressful. 2) *Map It Out*: Agree on the weekly routine. Include completing homework and getting ready for school the night before; doing chores—who, what, and when; activity times; and when the lights go out for bed-time. This organizing effort will reduce stress; it won’t turn you into robots. Live by a master calendar. 3) *Re-charge*: The weekends are busy too, but schedule family alone time and just have fun. If it can’t be all day, try a few hours. 4) *Weekly Summit*: Meet to analyze and make adjustments for the following week. Pass out kud-dos (and cookies).

Attitude-Changing Secrets



Scott Hamilton, the famous Olympic skater, once said: “The only disability in life is a bad attitude.” His extraordinary life of achievement and adversity convinced him that dealing with life’s challenges is something no one escapes. How well we master this task is reflected in how we behave and interact with others. Our attitude says something about how we are doing with our most important job—living. To fire up a new attitude, practice thinking and believing things that support the attitude you want. The more you practice this “refurbishment,” the faster change comes. Try this “cloud seeding” technique: Each night, fall asleep mentally ticking off all that you have done well that day. Focus on what went right. As a new attitude unfolds, you’ll notice new opportunities. You’ll feel and act more positively. Others will notice too, and they’ll say so.

Nurturing Your Creativity



You have probably discovered that your best ideas—those real rocket launchers—come while you are not at work.

They pop into your head while driving, walking, taking a shower, or participating in non-work activities. How can you capture this awareness and inspire creativity? Plan for opportunities where you can be stimulated by a completely different environment. Include new sounds, sights, places, conversations, people, and open space to free up your thoughts. Factor in undistracted “alone” time. When ideas come, have a way to capture or record the inspiration. Remember: Newton was alone under a tree when the apple hit him on the head.